ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government and the Orissa Govertnment are aware that huge quantities of trees are being stolen every day from Similipal, Satkosia, Sunabeda, Hemgiree, Chandaka, Malyagiri, Anantpura and Ranjagol Reserve Forests and other Forests of Orissa; and

(b) if so, what tangible steps are being taken by both the State Government and the Central Government?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, as reported by the Government of Orissa, sporadic instances of illicit felling have been occurring in general in certain forest areas in Orissa.

The State Government has taken measures such as frequent and intensified patrolling by the forest and the police officials, establishment of forest check posts at strategic points, deployment of staff in sensitive areas and setting up of Joint Forest Management Committees involving local people etc. Financial assistance is being provided by the Central Government for the protection of the forest and wild-life.

Problems of Food Processing Industries

1119. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representations from various associations of Food Processing Industries, detailing their problems which were inhibiting their growth;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to solve their problem and difficulties?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM): (a) to (c) The Ministry of Food Processing industries has been interacting with the industry associations on a regular basis. The constraints faced by the food processing industries include lack of infrastructural facilities, low margins, seasonality, high perishability, multiplicity of laws, tax structure, market development, high cost of packaging, etc.

To address the problems faced by the industry with regard to multiplicity of laws, regulatory authorities and standards, Government has constituted a Group

of Ministers to recommend an Integrated Food Law, independent regulators and comprehensive amendments to the existing legislations for facilitating fast pace growth of food processing industries. A number of plan schemes and interventions for infrastructure development including cold storage, refer vans, agri-export zones and food parks have been devised to facilitate food processing industries.

Rationalisation of tax structure is a continuous process and Government has brought down excise duty on processed fruits and vegetables to zero w.e.f. the Budget year 2000-2001.

Rationalising Taxes on FPIs

1120. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD:

Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are seeking to rationalise taxes, affecting the food processing industries;

(b) whether the Centre has requested the State Governments to consider granting zero sales tax status to such industries, especially in the case of perishable products;

(c) whether the Group of Ministers had been constituted to deliberate on integration of food laws and recommend a draft statute;

(d) whether the National Council for Applied Economic Research has estimated that investment in the food processing sector is likely to go up during the Tenth Five Year Plan; and

(e) if so, to what extent it is more compared to Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir. A Group of Ministers (GOM) has been constituted to recommend a Modern Integrated Food Law and amendment to related Laws like Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and orders under the Essential Commodities Act;

(d) and (e) In a study got conducted recently by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries through National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), an investment of Rs. 92.208 crores for processed food sector has been projected during Tenth Plan period in case GDP grows @ 8% per annum. During 9th Five Year Plan, investment in the Food Processing Sector was estimated as